View from the
Blackdown Hills

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MP joins fight against turbine

AN MP has has stepped up to give a helping hand to the ongoing campaign to stop the largest wind turbine in the Blackdown Hills going ahead.

Neil Parish, MP for Tiverton and Honiton, has written to Mid Devon District Council's planning department urging them to refuse a controversial application.

As reported in last month's View from the Blackdown Hills, John Hawker hopes to win permission from the council to install a 34-metre green energy generator at Highlands Farm, Hemyock but opposition is rife with over 200 letters against the proposal being sent to the council.

Mr Parish said in his letter "this wind turbine runs counter to the Devon Structure Plan" and that the Government intends to "reduce the subsidy for on-land turbines due to concern about the number of turbines and how intrusive they are into the countryside".

The council received around 220 letters from the public with just four of them in favour of the wind turbine. The rest objected to it on the grounds of its height, noise and intrusiveness in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Local campaigner Glyn Jones — referring to the comment made by Mr Hawker's agent, Tristan Tonks, of Energy Descent Ltd that many shorter wind turbines do not work properly — said: "Mr Tonk's argument that having a shorter turbine 'would not work properly', is nonsense.

"What he means is that a smaller turbine would not work for his investors who are hoping to earn large sums from the current feed-in tariff.

"These outside investors have no connection to Hemyock but hope to profit by destroying the beauty and tranquillity of part of the Blackdown Hills."

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◆ FROM left, Kieran Handforth, Ben Simpson and Alex Parker enjoy the jubilee celebrations

Right royal exhibition

AN art exhibition was turned into a right royal occasion with a true jubilee twist.

The Hemyock Grand Opening of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Art Exhibition was held at Hemyock Primary School in May.

Art was exhibited not only by local artists but also children of Hemyock's primary school and pre-school — including poem and art competitions.

The Hemyock Highnesses — Geoff and Lyn Taylor — were greeted at the school with a presentation of flowers and cutting of the ribbon to officially open the exhibition.

A picnic was enjoyed by visitors and there was a host of games and a fun football match as well as teas, coffees and cakes.

'Adverse weather' causes show move

HONITON Show organisers have decided to move this year's event from Thursday, August 2nd to Thursday, August 30th.

A spokesperson said the decision was made because of adverse weather conditions, and added: "With the forecast not improving, we have decided to move the show to August 30th."

View from the Blackdown Hills

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Mission completed for DoE youngsters

MEMBERS of The Five Alive Duke of Edinburgh's Award Group came together for an awards ceremony in Stockland on Sunday, July 8th.

The group is run under the auspices of the Five Alive Mission Community and award leader Anna Crabbe said: "Jennie Doble, Adam Taylor, Henry Cornish, Katie Durrant, Stephanie Colvin, Astrid Heasman, Emily Elliott. Reuben Heeler-Frood, Josh Fletcher and Jake Harvey all received their bronze awards.

"Congratulations also to Andy Watson, who recently completed his gold award and will receive his award at St James's Palace."

The award ceremony was held in the village church as part the morning service.

◆ FROM left, Anna Crabbe, Katie Durrant, Jennie Doble, Emily Elliot, Josh Fletcher, Jake Harvey, Stephanie Colvin

Bold Buckland Bolters brave the elements for popular run

◆ FRONT row, from left, Sharon Dyer, Finlay Smith, Ben Dyer, Alfie Hine, Luca Smith, Scarlett Spokes, Archie Spokes, Harry Hine. Second row, from left, Oscar Mills, Aaron Dyer, Alex Albon, Joshua Lee, James Salaman. Back row, from left, Katie Lee, James HIne

RUNNING group Buckland Bolters had a great turn out, at the popular Forde Abbey Fun Run on Thursday, June 21st.

The horrendous weather conditions didn't dampen the enthusiasm and the team ran fantastically.

Young members Scarlett Spokes, four, and Luca Smith ran like rockets, whilst Katie Lee and Jim Hine did a brilliant job supporting and running with the little ones.

WORKING OUR WOODLANDS

Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association with John Greenshields

WELL it happened, we had to cancel the Woodland Fair. We were gutted, so many people had spent so much time preparing for the day.

We were not the only cancellations, there were dozens of fetes, school sports days and garden visits ruined by the weather, even the Honiton Show is postponed until August 30th. Although we have lost a considerable amount of money, it is hoped to go again next year with a bigger and better show.

Anyone else noticed there are fewer apples this year? Some say it's the bee decline, but we had a bumper crop of bees up until the wet spell. Apples seem to go in cycles as do blackberries. I think its because the tree, when it has a bumper crop one year, it also forfeits some growth, the next year it concentrates on growth and not fruit to compensate.

Either way we are going to be short of juice and cider. Might have to do a bit of "scrumping" next door, last year we did 200 litres of juice for the extended family and still have about 25 litres left.

For the past few years we have been rearing our own free range pigs for ourselves and for sale. We move them around so as not to do to much damage. I am very aware of the damage they do to trees, and where there are young trees, I have an ever-expanding fence.

Unfortunately, with the rooting around they do, every weed under the sun comes up, and I am afraid that, although I don't like doing it, I spray with a herbicide to keep the docks and stingers down. If the ground is left for a year after the pigs are gone we get a tremendous regeneration of trees of all sorts, and I spend days digging them up and potting them ready to plant out in a few years' time.

Tree grading courses are doing well, and we had a group of guys from the National Trust here recently. They are taking future climate change very seriously.

The future trees trust is looking at the provenance of tree seeds from more southerly countries, using the same species as us, but with a higher tolerance to a dryer climate, although it seems more like global 'wetting' than warming at present. These 'new' or 'future' trees will be grown in monitored plots alongside our native seed and we are hopping that the Blackdown Hills will be one of them.

I am putting this to paper in the middle of July, and it looks like the jet stream is finally moving north at last, so I hope you all get some summer and spare a thought or two for farmers who have had their cattle in for several weeks, and because the grass was not cut at the correct time the goodness has gone, and has lost its value.

To contact John call 01823 660764 or email parkfarm@tinyonline.co.uk

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◆ IRONBRIDGE under the A30 near Honiton where the floods rose to an impassable level

No escape on the day the rain came

THE Blackdown Hills did not escape the torrential rain and floods which hit the Westcountry last month, causing havoc on the roads and across the countryside.

The owners of a bed and breakfast at Upottery came to the rescue of a couple of its guests when they became stranded in the flash floods that struck the area.

The guests at Odle Farm Bed and Breakfast were visiting from America to attend a wedding in Membury on Saturday, July 7th but were unable to use the flooded roads and instead had to be driven to Honiton across a common in a 4x4 vehicle.

Bed and breakfast owner Karen Marshallsay said: "We had a few guests who were stranded in the awful weather which caused flash floods on that Saturday.

"Some of our guests had come all the way from America for a wedding and then were stranded here.

"Luckily, we managed to take them over the common in our 4X4 where the landlord of the Sidmouth Arms — who was going to the wedding — took them to Membury for the wedding.

"Other guests we had staying in a cottage needed to get to Honiton to catch a train for their flight back to Canada. We managed to get them to Honiton but all the trains had been cancelled. In the end they drove to Dorchester for a train.

"It certainly was a team effort to help everyone who was stranded thanks to the dreadful weather. Although, I wouldn't want too many stressful weekends like that one.

"I'm sure there are plenty of stories people could tell. The weather this year has been awful, and must have cost a lot of people a lot of money."

Despite the severity of the conditions, it was clear that the planned response of the close partnership of the emergency services — the Environment Agency, police, fire service as well as the local authorities — immediately swung into action and by Sunday afternoon, things were beginning to return to normal.

East Devon District Council's StreetScene staff were out in force all over the district from the start, tackling the problems as they arose.

Leader of the council, Paul Diviani, said: "I am very proud of their dedication and community spirit and the resilience of our communities who were also fully involved in the clear-up.

"And a special thanks must go to John Golding and the housing team for ensuring that those who had to evacuate their homes were found shelter in the emergency centres and with family and friends.

"Whilst emergencies are not a pleasant experience, it is reassuring to know help is at hand."

Residents of Honiton were cut off as the roads in and out of the town were shut, with both lanes of the A30 closed.

South West Trains also suspended its rail services between Honiton and Yeovil after there was flooding on the line at Axminster.

Many people tried in vain to tackle the rising water levels but to no avail.

Feniton residents were unable to pass under the A30 at Ironbridge after water rose to an impassable level.

◆ THE bridge at the bottom of New Road, Upottery, between Rawridge and Upottery

Volunteers call for On Your Bike work

SUSTAINABLE Villages is hosting two events with On Your Bike, a Wellington-based charity which aims to train and employ disadvantaged, unemployed and young people to recycle and sell affordable bikes.

The scheme helps to reduce the number of bikes going to rubbish tips — estimated around 4,000 a day — by refurbishing them.

On Your Bike is now looking to recruit 10 village volunteers within 15 miles of its base in Wellington, who will be trained, equipped and supported in bicycle maintenance. These volunteers will then be able to decide when and what they do in their area. The first event will take place on Saturday, August 4th from 10am until 12.30pm at Holcombe Rogus Village Hall. The second will be at Halberton Village Hall on Saturday, September 8th from 10am until 12.30pm.

At both events, people are invited to bring their bike for a free visual inspection, and to find out more about On Your Bike and the volunteers' scheme.

The workshop will take place at Unit 7B Rylands Business Park, Bagley Road, Rockwell Green, Wellington. For further details call 01823 459611, email cycle@on-your-bike.org or visit www.On-Your-Bike.org.

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Low-cost family summer days out

ANY readers worried about the cost of days out over the school holidays have some help.

According to a recent report by charity Family Action, many children in 'poor and middle-income families' face a summer of being 'stuck at home' as their parents struggle to afford family days out.

In response, the Forestry Commission is encouraging families to get out and about exploring their local forest — a perfect, value-for-money day out. Forestry Commission sites in the local area include Great Wood, near Bridgwater, and Castle Neroche, near Taunton.

The Public Forest Estate in England already hosts over 40million visits every year and offers excellent value for money. It has 177 walking trails, 106 cycling centres, 28 visitor centres, 24 campsites, 16 art installations, 73 equestrian facilities and 15 forest drives.

Many sites have wonderful picnic areas, outdoor play areas and some free barbecue areas so people can bring their own food to save money too. Or there are a range of wonderful on site cafés that offer good value for money options.

People can find out where their nearest forest is by visiting www.forestry.gov.uk/england or by downloading our free ForestXplorer app www.forestry.gov.uk/mobileapp.

Some forests charge a relatively small amount for parking but are otherwise entirely free to visit. All sites that charge for parking offer a Discovery Pass which includes free parking for a whole year as well as a range of other benefits – visit www.forestry.gov/pass for details.

'Zumbathon' raises £450 for pre-school

A FANTASTIC £450 was raised for Culmstock Pre-school during a two-hour Zumbathon on Friday, June 29th at Uffculme Sport and Leisure Centre.

Led by Rachael Parker and her team of instructors, over 50 people took part. They Zumba-ed the evening away to a DJ and the fabulous sounds of the Blackdown Steel Band. There were stalls and a grand raffle kindly supported by local businesses including Tony Pryce Sports, Padbrook Park, Willows Gym, The Culm Valley Inn, The Strand Stores, Culmstock, Exeter City FC and Exeter Chiefs Rugby Club. An enormous amount of fun was had by all.

Culmstock Pre-school has an outstanding award from Ofsted and prides itself in developing happy and confident children in a nurturing environment. Funds raised from the Zumbathon will be used to update computer equipment.

'No connection'

IN the July issue *View from the Blackdown Hills, it was stated that* John Hawker, of Highlands Farm, Hemyock, owned a growing meat and poultry business. In fact the business is run by Sarah and Robin Loughrey from the site, who rent the property from Mr Hawker.

The Loughreys would like to state they have no connection with plans to build a wind turbine on the site.

◆ ANTHONY Bosanquet, left, past president of the Royal Forestry Society, presents John Greenshields with the 2012 Sylva Cup for his extraordinary contribution to woodland and forestry management

John wins forest award for extraordinary work

A FOREST friend among the Blackdown Hills has been awarded a prestigious cup for his 'extraordinary' contribution to the woodland management.

John Greenshields, of Park Farm, Wellington — and *View from the Blackdown Hills* Working our Woodlands columnist — has won the Royal Forestry Society Sylva Cup for his forestry work.

The Royal Forestry Society's (RFS) 2012 Sylva Cup to recognise a person who has made an extraordinary contribution to woodland or forestry management has been presented to John Greenshields, from Park Farm, Wellington, Somerset.

John was nominated by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, by East Devon AONB Partnership and by the Forestry Commission's Neroche Partnership.

A spokesperson for the the Forestry Commission's Neroche Partnership said: "John's passion for woods and wood products makes him an extraordinary ambassador for our native woodlands. He is certainly deserving of wider recognition."

John is a farmer whose passion for woodlands, their sustainable management and local wood products has led him to involve and inspire others. His most recent project is The Living Tree Bank — tree mapping of standing trees to help increase the value of standing trees for their owners.

He argues that, under the present grant schemes, felling licenses are being granted for thinning trees without the trees that might be capable of being used in construction being graded while still standing. This leads to the owner not getting the best price and waste.

John said: "I have been somewhat overwhelmed by the nomination and subsequent award, and I am honoured to receive it for something that I regard as pleasure.

"I am always pleasantly surprised at the love and enthusiasm of woodlandowners, and together with their commitment keeps our countryside the way it is."

John has always been keen to lead by example. He has not only increased the woodlands on his own holding to 40 hectares but he set up the Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association (www.woodbiz.co.uk) which is now a thriving organisation, encouraging woodland owners and contractors to work together and exchange ideas.

He also instigated a pilot project to discover the aspirations of the owners of the many woodlands that exist within the Blackdown AONB, and using the information embarked on a two-year project with the Silvanus Trust called Working our Woodlands to encourage woodlands owners to manage their woodlands and work together. John has also worked extensively with local schools and community groups. He practises what he preaches, heating three houses with wood fuel harvested on his own farm.

The RFS Excellence awards are held annually, rotating around England, Wales and Scotland on a seven year cycle. In 2012 entries were invited from across Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire. They move to the North West of England in 2013.

The RFS organises woodland visits and activities, and welcomes new members. For further information please contact the RFS on 01442 822028, email rfshq@rfs.org.uk or visit www.rfs.org.uk

For further details and for pictures, please contact Wendy Necar, RFS Communications Officer on 01926 421679 or 07973523168.

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The winning frame

◆ THE joint-winning shot of the Countryside Alliance's Hunting Under the Act photographic competition — by Lewis Gillingham, 17

A BLACKDOWN Hills teenager has won a prestigious national photographic competition.

Lewis Gillingham, 17, from Awliscombe, has been named joint-winner in the Countryside Alliance's Hunting Under the Act photographic competition.

Lewis's photograph — A February Morning with the Axe Vale — is an atmospheric shot, taken in late February, of the Axe Vale Hunt.

The judging panel, including Exmoor-based Countryside Alliance president, Baroness Mallalieu, admired both the clarity of the shot and the fact that the photo shows the special bond between man and hound.

The competition was launched in February with the intention of announcing the winners on July 10th, the 15th anniversary of the Hyde Park Rally and the Countryside Alliance's spiritual birthday.

The competition aimed to show that hunts are still together and are united for hunting's future despite the presence of the hunting act.

Lewis's photo will now appear on the cover of the Countryside Alliance's autumn magazine, due out in September.

Countryside Alliance Executive Chairman Barney White-Spunner, who led the judging panel, commented: "We had hundreds of entries to this competition and the calibre was very high. As judges, we were impressed to see so much encapsulated in the entries, from hunting's tradition to the beauty of the animals and landscapes and, most importantly, the enjoyment and passion that hunting inspires in its followers.

"Congratulations to Lewis for this exceptional win and also to Tina for her photo of the Torrington Farmers Hounds. A love of hunting runs right through the Westcountry and these photos highlight that love extremely well."

More than just meat money for group trio

COMPLETE Meats of Honiton gave cash boosts to a trio of local groups, continuing its support in the community when it donated a total of £150 to local groups.

At a special presentation at the Honiton store, three local groups benefited from the ongoing generosity of the business, each taking away a cheque for £50.

Cheques were presented to President of Honiton Rugby Club David Toddy for general club funds and Andrew and June Mycroft, of Honiton Folk Dance Club, which they will donate towards their main charity, The British Heart Foundation.

Youngsters from 1st Honiton Scouts also attended the presentation alongside Scout Leader Mike Batten and will be using the money to support their general youth activities.

Forest sell-off off

THE Independent Panel on Forestry, set up in 2011 by the Government in the wake of the shelved plans to dispose of the public forest estate, published its final report on July 4th.

The report, which has subsequently been clearly accepted by the Secretary of State, Caroline Spellman, is that the public forest estate should remain in public ownership.

The prospect of a sell-off of the forest is now firmly off the agenda. The panel recommends that the public forest should be 'defined in statute as land held in trust for the nation', subject to a charter and governed by trustees.

Thanks to the efforts of Richard Westlake, Jane Hole and other local residents, the strength of local feeling for the Neroche forest was conveyed to the panel during its deliberations, amongst over 40,000 other submissions which the panel received.

As a result, the community around the Neroche forest played its part alongside other similar vibrant examples across the country, in shaping the panel's views and recommendations.

The importance of forests for access and recreation, for health and well being, for education and for the green economy is emphasised in the report, alongside a recognition of the value of forests for wildlife and as a carbon sink.

The panel calls for a new renaissance in the 'wood culture' of England, with the value of forests and woodlands for the economy, society and environment being much more explicitly recognised by Government and civil society. It also recognises the very personal, spiritual dimension of people's attachment to forests and trees, which the Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, Chair of the Panel, was keen to acknowledge.

The report proposes that the current Forest Enterprise should evolve into a new English forest management organisation, independent of Government, able to be more entrepreneurial in maximising the value it generates from the public forest, in order to invest more in the public benefits which the forest offers.

It is important to understand that the panel's report is a set of recommendations only. The Government will consider its response and this is expected to be published in January 2013. The full panel report can be accessed via the Defra website, at www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel.

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A View from the clubs

Villagers show off their blooms

OFFWELL villagers flocked to their village hall for their annual flower and produce show recently.

Once again, the annual show was well supported by villagers who put on display their best selection of flower arrangements, fresh produce and baked goods as well as art, poetry and handicrafts.

From perfumed roses and brightly coloured flowers to a huge selection of cakes, biscuits and alcoholic treats such as sloe gin and homemade wines, the hall was bursting at the seams with high quality local produce.

Entries in the children's classes were also on the up, with a huge number of entries from Offwell Primary School and the local pre-school group.

Winners of the show were presented with trophies and gifts by long-serving member of the Offwell community and much-loved local lady Monica Allen, who was then presented with a bouquet to thank her for years of support.

Secretary Bridget Hallowes said: "This is a really traditional and local show and something we want to continue building on, updating the classes with the times and giving everyone a chance to shine.

"Although entries were slightly down, more and more people are exhibiting at the show and the judges were highly impressed with the standards and quality shown, particularly in the flower and vegetable classes after such poor weather.

"I would like to thank the hard working committee for helping organise another successful show, the Women's Institute for their afternoon teas and the many who contributed to the show."

Results: Most points in show — Sarah Critchard; 2nd place points — Alison Monkhouse; flower class winner — Bridget Hallowes; Cut flower class — Sarah Critchard; fruit and vegetable class —Pauline Gryffiths and Sue Atterbury; Home produce class — Alison Monkhouse; Brewer's Trophy — Sarah Critchard and Lucy Lanning; Handicrafts class — Sarah Critchard; Children's — Shaun Monkhouse; Playgroup — Lily Grace Garner; Single Rose Bloom — Sue Atterbury; Old English Rose — Bridget Hallows; Otter Nurseries Plug Plant — John Seymour.

◆ **ABOVE, Monica Allen presents organiser Bridget Hallowes the prize for most points in the flower classes**

◆ **ABOVE, Elana Pavey and Izzy Abrey, both four, show off their arty handiwork in the pre-school class. Right, Monica Allen presents joint-winners in the fruit and vegetable classes Pauline Gryffiths and Sue Atterbury with their cup**

bh ba Blackdown Hills Business Association

Blackdown Hills Marquee
in the lower field at Honiton Show
NEW DATE - THURSDAY 30TH AUGUST 2012

LOCAL businesses, craftsmen and women offering unique products and services, come together in our marquee for Blackdown Hills businesses and supporters, in an array of exhibits and activities giving you a unique experience at the Honiton Show this year.

Once again we will showcase rural crafts in front of the marquee. There will be a range of local craftsmen and women offering children's activities and demonstrations throughout the day. This will include demonstrations by Escot Education & Camp Wild! The Blackdown Hills Hedge Association and the Blackdown Hills & East Devon Woodland Association will also demonstrate crafts and techniques as well as providing details of their organisations.

The Blackdown Hills marquee offers a diverse range of local interest organisations and businesses offering unique products and services from the area.

The Blackdown Hills marquee is coordinated by the Blackdown Hills Business Association.
For further details of the activities and benefits of membership, please contact the
BHBA at St Ivel House, Station Road, Hemyock, Cullompton, Devon EX15 3SJ.
E: info@bhba.org.uk or T: 01823 681484 www.bhba.org.uk.
Membership is £50 per year and includes listings in two on-line directories, monthly networking meetings, training events, socials, markets and shows and much more. Visit the online Blackdown Hills Directory to source local products and services at www.blackdown-hills.co.uk
With thanks to Jackson Plants for their continued support of the BHBA at the Honiton Show
www.jacksonplants.co.uk

A clever weaver

STARTING your future career at the age of five is somewhat unusual, but that's just what the demonstrator Talitha Clarke did at Sampford Arundel WI meeting.

She is a weaver and her work is very innovative and imaginative, using 'finds' such as leaves, shells and even cocktail sticks. She's also designed fabric herself, using one in her wedding dress and for her groom's waistcoat. She had a varied career and higher education path, before now working mainly for herself. Members were able to see and handle some of her work, and the various small looms.

Members feel that their own lives are a tapestry, with all that's been going on and being planned. The flower show was a success in spite of the rain, and the cancellation of the fete. And in spite of everyone saying they 'had absolutely nothing ready to show', the hall was alive with colour and beauty.

A good and full report about the excellent annual meeting in the Albert Hall had been received. Somerset's own annual meeting comes up in November. Then the County Carol Service at Wells is on December 12th, and next year's diaries and calendars are on sale already. For Sampford itself there's a walk on August 14th (Holywell Lake 18:45). A team will take part in the county quiz this month, and the lunch is on September 24th . Help is needed for sandwich making for the carnival on September 29th.

Harbour stories told

IT was lovely to hear Graham Foreshaw, give an enthusiastic talk on his work as harbourmaster of Lyme Regis Harbour.

He showed slides of different aspects of the harbour and the work involved in keeping it in good repair. The harbour was first built in 1100s and many changes have been made to enhance the facilities through the years. There are now moorings for up to 240 boats which bring in funds to keep up the maintenance. They have been able to increase the moorings by dredging the harbour, many articles are found during the dredging including Wellies, walking sticks and surprisingly, teaspoons are the most frequently found items.

Another very enjoyable evening was had by our members, plus five visitors.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 4th at 7.30 pm at All Saints Village Hall. The competition will be 'A hand-knitted item to wear'.

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Written by countryside correspondent
TONY JACKSON

Rain is disaster for hay

SO far, this has been a summer of unrelenting gloom weather-wise. However, there must, I feel certain, be light at the end of the dark, rain-drenched tunnel even if it will almost be too late to for those of us who are desperately wondering when, if ever, we will be able to make hay or small-bale silage.

Many farmers have acres of uncut grass running to seed and losing its goodness. We have a mere acre to cut, but this is intended to keep my wife's hunter in good stead through the winter; fortunately we have some bales left from last year, but the prospect at the moment is fairly grim. The lack of hay and silage will inevitably affect the equestrian world and I can see the price going through the roof. Not a pleasing outlook.

On the butterfly front there is little good news. Currently, a few meadow browns are fluttering in the tall, wet grasses, with the occasional hedge brown, but the more colourful and once plentiful red admirals, peacocks and tortoiseshells are completely absent as too are so many of the moths which we once took for granted as they fluttered against lights or sought nectar in the garden dusk.

However, ubiquitous rabbits are again displaying their resilience. Last year, myxomatosis destroyed virtually the entire population in my immediate area. Virtually but not quite all! Suddenly the odd rabbit was seen again, and now, after a successful breeding season in the spring, numbers are back to something close to normal. This, for me, is a relief as I greatly enjoy rabbit pie and casserole!

Rabbits may be back but there seems to be a dearth of bats. Usually, in a normal summer I see one or two pipistrelles tracing their flickering flight against the evening sky as they search for insects, but so far none have been spotted. Nor, as one grows older can the thin calls any longer be heard.

I hear that two new films made by Dorset Wildlife Trust will be showing at the ICC1360 Arena in Weymouth as part of The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad by the sea.

The films will feature the county's outstanding wildlife and habitats on land and sea and will be shown on a giant screen. The screening will take place at Weymouth Pavilion Theatre forecourt from July 26th to September 9th and tickets cost £3 for a half-hour session. Tickets available on 01305 783225.

Jenny Smedley from Bishopswood has written to tell me about her bird-feeder squirrel deterrent. As we all know, grey squirrels are athletic, crafty and determined once they spot a bird feeding station.

They'll climb up poles, leap onto tables and swing from seemingly inaccessible feed containers. The answer, says Jenny, who prefers not to kill grey squirrels, is a small aviary. She cuts holes in the wire to fit garden birds and wires smooth metal rings round the holes to make them tidy. This, she writes, is the only squirrel-proof feeder she has come across. The squirrels give up, while vulnerable birds are largely protected from sparrowhawks which can no longer pluck victims from feeders as the potential prey have learned to remain inside the aviary until danger has passed. In addition, she has slotted bamboo poles across the aviary for perches.

What size is the aviary, I wonder, is it suspended or set on a pole and how long does it take garden birds to overcome any natural fear of entering such an enclosure? Perhaps Jenny will let readers know and if she has invented a genuine squirrel-proof feeder maybe she ought to consider its commercial applications!

Meanwhile, Sarah Chapman from Axminster, a regular correspondent, tells me that she has four swallow nests, all in use, in her garage, with one containing five chicks. Young starlings are also coming to her feeders, together with great, blue and coal tits, nuthatches and greater spotted woodpeckers. I can only envy her, for we are bereft of swallows this year, though there do seem to be more house martins in the air than usual while at ground level rabbits are thriving once again, having been severely affected by myxomatosis last year. As I write, half-a-dozen are scuttling around newly cut hay in front of my office window.

When did you last see twinkling light of a glow-worm? Researchers fear that the glow-worm's light is fading and that the creature is, like so many others, in sharp decline. The glow-worm is, of course, not a worm but a beetle. Insignificant, small and pale brown, it is the female of the species which employs a pale yellow-green light to attract males and is, as far as I know, the only beetle to use such a signal in this country.

The actual light is created by a chemical called luciferin which oxidises in the presence of water and oxygen to create the glow on the tip of the beetle's body. Once a common sight in meadows, along hedgerows and verges, the spectrum of twinkling lights is becoming increasingly rare due to a combination of increased use of herbicides and pesticides and over-zealous grass-cutting.

Now the Devon Wildlife Trust is asking the public to be on the look-out for glow-worms and report any sightings. The female glow-worms climb to the tip of tall grass stems from which they can send out their signal to attract a mate and are active from May to September. The Devon Wildlife Trust has set up a special glow-worm survey form on line which takes only a few moments to complete and can be found at www.devonwildlifetrust.org . You can also call Devon Wildlife Trust with details of any glow-worm sighting on 01392 279244.

I would also be very interested to hear from any readers in the Pulman's area of West Dorset and South Somerset who encounter any glow-worm sightings this summer. I must confess that it is some years since I last saw these strange creatures and I must make the effort to discover whether there are any in my area.

To contact Tony Jackson, write to: Country Scene, South Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5AD or by email to: wardjackson@tiscali.co.uk

The views expressed are those of the columnist and not necessarily of the newspaper.

Beautifully Bespoke from the Blackdown Hills

David Lloyd

MY name is David Lloyd. I have been a cabinet maker since 1995. My workshop is in Dunkeswell, within the beautiful Blackdown Hills AONB. What do I make? Well, almost anything in wood!

Bespoke kitchens to wardrobes, bathrooms to windows, stair cases to grandfather clocks, tables, chairs, four poster beds – to name a few. Designs are agreed with the client after discussing needs, specification and any foibles or special features they may require.

Bespoke furniture making permits freedom of design and choice of material to suit all tastes and budgets.

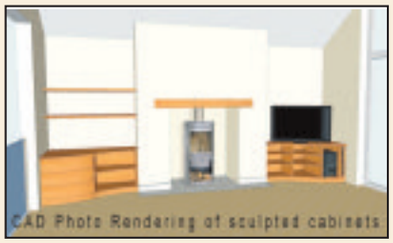
I am passionate about using English timber for my commissions, for example I am currently using Ash from Offwell for drawer components. The more local the better!

However, I will use timber from overseas if the job requires it or you would like to use it.

Sadly I will not be displaying at the Honiton Show this year, due to its postponement. I would welcome anyone that would like to visit my workshop. Please ring first to check I am available. You can call me on 01404 891800 or please visit my website for further information and view my extensive portfolio. www.davidrlloyd.co.uk.

Lyman Design

OBRAY Lyman of Lyman Design is a member of the Guild of Master Craftsmen and takes their ethos of excellent customer service and quality of workmanship very seriously. Creating fitted cabinetry for awkward alcoves, or designing bespoke contemporary furniture, Obray truly loves what he does. He said, "Every piece I make is a reflection of who I am, so I really put my heart into it. Making effective use of space can be difficult and finding free standing off-the-peg furniture to fit a particular space can sometimes be impossible. Obray will help you with design ideas and sketches and can even do a photo realistic CAD rendering of what the finished furniture will look like in situ. He works with solid wood, veneered panels or whatever best fits the project, but believes in using sustainable and locally produced timber where possible. Obray works on commission but also designs his own furniture.



CAD Photo Rendering of sculpted cabinets

Playways

FOR many people the difficulty of what to do with that awkward corner or difficult slope in their garden is one that remains unresolved. However, when it's time to give the children somewhere of their own there's a company in East Devon for whom those challenging spaces give the opportunity to do something really creative.

Playways have been building children's play equipment for over 10 years. And whilst they have a wide range of products that can be bought off the shelf a particular speciality is being able to see the possibilities in any area small or large and being able to create something that is truly special.

Martin, the owner of Playways, started the business after building a raised playhouse for his son. I wanted to have something in the garden for Henry that was his own space, but everything on the market didn't seem to me to built the withstand the rigours of play by a growing boy, not just now but 10 or more years into the future.

Playways try where possible to use locally sourced materials, with much of the timber used being grown on the Duchy estates in Devon and Cornwall.

Playways have an extensive range of playhouses, platform playhouses and climbing frames, but a particular speciality is designing custom installations through their 'made to measure' service.

A good example of this is a commission that Playways recently undertook in the Surrey Hills. The client had a stunning but steeply sloping garden with panoramic views of rural Kent and Surrey. Although much of the garden had previously been landscaped and terraced there was a significant and difficult slope that had become overgrown with shrubs, weeds and general scrub. What Martin from Playways saw was the opportunity to create an exciting play area that included a hand built playhouse, custom deck and separate raised towers, all linked by bridges and walkways.

A visitor enters at the top of the slope via a winding path with rope hand rails that leads the user from ground level to a deck that extends into and over the surrounding trees and bushes. The main deck area has been built with a half octagonal front so that the organic and naturalised feel of the whole structure is maintained. The cedar shingled playhouse, which is lined and painted inside so that the interior is just like the plastered walls of a real house, has plenty of space to play indoors.

Crossing a chain link clatter bridge, the play area opens out to a look-out tower and a further raised area which has a climbing wall, fireman's pole and enormous chute slide.

We wanted to provide something that would quickly naturalise into the surrounding garden. A play area such as this should be something that really works with the garden, being an enhancing feature. For example, we frequently use the same colour paints that are used for the main house.

All in all the play area is every child's dream and has created a stunning feature in the garden providing interest and activity for all.

Playways are able to create climbing frames and playhouses for gardens large and small. If you would like to find out more about what they could do for you why not give them a call on 01404 861379, or visit their website at www.playways.co.uk.

Thomas Ferguson

THOMAS Ferguson started his career making the finest linen for a family business and he now pursues the same high quality tradition in his favourite natural material: wood. As a furniture maker and joiner, he endeavours to provide a personal and highly versatile service for both private and commercial customers. Whether it is a contemporary-style cabinet or classic farmhouse kitchen, every commission is meticulously designed and handmade to order using carefully chosen materials and time-honoured techniques. Thomas is also chairman of Culm Waste and Minerals Group, an action group dedicated to protecting the beautiful part of Devon on the edge of the Blackdowns that so inspires him.

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Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding

From our chairman

Over the last year, the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been at the heart of passionate debate about the British countryside. We've heard arguments about planning, habitat regulations, and wind and solar farms.

I believe that to make the case for protecting our special landscapes, it is essential that we enthuse and involve everyone who lives, visits and works in them. This year, the Blackdown Hills AONB team has encouraged local people to take part in wildlife surveys, get hands-on with building and restoration, and enjoy over 100 outdoor events. AONB residents have been able to show their pride in the area with new village road signs and information boards.

We have continued to take a positive position on renewable energy, while seeking to protect the landscape from unacceptable damage. We commissioned an in-depth report into reducing the AONB's greenhouse gas emissions, and were closely involved in advising local planning authorities on the huge increase in planning applications for wind and solar installations.

As new planning laws were drawn up, we helped parish councils to prepare for a greater role in the process.

At a time when the countryside is under the spotlight, I am very proud of all the work that team and all our partner organisations have done to ensure that the Blackdown Hills AONB remains cherished and protected for future generations.

Paul Diviani
Chairman, Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

The Blackdown Hills is one of the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – landscapes protected for the nation because of their exceptional countryside, heritage and wildlife. Over 80 organisations work together to protect this special place.

Funding and finance

The work of the Blackdown Hills AONB team is funded by Defra, Devon and Somerset county councils, East Devon, Mid Devon and South Somerset district councils and Taunton Deane Borough Council. For details of income and expenditure for 2011-12, please see the annual review online.

Making it Local and Neroche

This year we have continued to support the Neroche scheme, and Making it Local grants fund. To find out about what these major projects have acheived in 2011 – 2012 go to:

www.makingitlocal.org
www.nerochescheme.org

Photo credits: Dan Bryan and Chris Goodman

To read the annual review online, go to:
www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Annual-review-2011-12.html

Natural Beauty – a review of 2011–12

Landscape

- We provided funding and support for projects to involve volunteers in mapping and surveying wildlife including bats, swifts and waxcap fungi
- We managed an oral history project, funded by Making it Local, which collected scores of reminiscences from local people and made them available at www.harvestories.co.uk
- We took part in an exchange with French woodland owners to learn from each other about managing woods and hedges as part of CORDIALE, a European cross-border project
- We commissioned an in-depth report into the AONB's greenhouse gas footprint to support work on reducing emissions
- We took part in the Devon Landscape Character Assessment which helps people understand the different types of landscape and plan sympathetic development
- We supported projects to better understand our heritage, including digitising Somerset's historic tithe maps, and interpreting an aerial survey of the landscape

Sustainability

- We published the Design Guide for Houses to help planners, homeowners, architects and builders work in harmony with the AONB's heritage
- We brought together local parishes to produce the Blackdown Hills Community Plan, addressing common issues such as severe weather planning, broadband and local transport
- Our Sustainable Development Fund supported 16 projects including school composting equipment, community shops, outdoor classrooms, local information points, forest experiences for families and the Neroche Conservation Volunteers group
- On behalf of the Blackdown Hills Trust, we set up the Force for Nature project with Neroche/Forestry Commission. The AONB developed a one-stop shop for volunteering to be launched in summer 2012
- With Neroche/Forestry Commission and Natural England, we launched the Beef, Butterflies and Trees project which appointed two consultants to work with landowners on managing woodlands and grazing rough marginal land
- We continued to support the Making it Local grants scheme for enterprising projects in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon

Communication

- New maps on our website help people to find wildlife reserves and other places to visit, and a series of eight cycle routes was completed and published online
- Our popular Countryside Events programme promoted 114 events throughout the year
- We took part in Phototrails online, which allows people of all abilities to plan successful trips to the countryside, by photographing two trails in the AONB
- We supported arts projects including a landscape photography tour, a book of folktales and community dance
- We worked with the Highways Authorities to design AONB signs for villages. Ford Street and Corfe installed the first signs

www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk
Blackdown Hills AONB, St Ivel House, Station Road, Hemyock EX15 3SJ
Tel: 01823 680681 Email: blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk

Blackdown Hills AONB

Leisure Review

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Organised by ..... Tel no .....

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Please note: This is a free service and whilst we endeavour to include all entries, we cannot guarantee all listings submitted will be published. Please use one form per event.

WE ARE UNABLE TO TAKE DIARY DATES LISTINGS OR QUERIES OVER THE PHONE
Deadline for Diary Dates entries is on Fridays at 12 noon

It's a great day out — all day!

IT is one day of the year which promises an event to entertain all the family — all day long.

The Melplash Show at West Bay, Bridport, will open to the public at 8am until 6.30pm on Thursday, August 23rd and will boasts a rare opportunity to see the finest livestock — cows, pigs, sheep and goats — in the area as well as horses, ponies and donkeys.

In the horticultural, floral and handicraft marquees, visitors will be able to enjoy a fantastic display of exhibits, and will be amazed at the size and quality of the vegetables and flowers on show.

In the Toolstation main ring, spectators will be entertained by an unrivalled motorcycle stunt show by Jason Smyth Adrenaline Tour, a magnificent heavy horse display of agricultural and trade vehicles, show jumping, parade of hounds and beagles and the magnificent grand parade of winning animals.

A packed programme of activities in the Countryside Area includes otters, bees, birds of prey, gun dogs, ferret and terrier racing, as well as a chance to see and learn about local crafts.

The destination for seeing, tasting and buying the finest food and drink in the area is the Food Hall and the By- the-Sea Marquee. In the cookery theatre, visitors will be able to watch local chefs Lesley Waters, Philip Eagle from Hix's Fish and Oyster House, Lyme Regis, Helen Choudhury from Taj Mahal, Bridport, Karl Bashford from Three Horseshoes, Powerstock, Caroline Parkins from Leakers Bakery Bridport and Stefan Frigon from the Olive Tree.

With vintage cars and motorcycles, and over 300 trade stands from local food, crafts to heavy machinery there is plenty to interest everyone. For up to date information visit www.melplashshow.co.uk.

Diary dates

Sunday, July 15th
BLACKDOWN: The communities of Broadwindsor, Blackdown and Burstock are holding a Summer Fayre in the grounds of Blackdown House, Blackdown DT8 3LE (B3165 Crewkerne-Lyme Regis road). Come along and enjoy the gardens of Blackdown House, have a cream tea and listen to the Blackdown Hills musical group, Steel the Show. There will be various stalls and games for the children including 'decorate a crown' competition. From 2pm until 6pm. Contact Philip on 01460 30661/30517.

Sunday, August 12th
CLAYHIDON: Tiverton and District Ramblers is holding a Walking the Blackdown Hills event. The walk will commence at 10.30am, walkers to meet at Clayhidon Village Hall car park. The walk will be eight miles through some beautiful countryside to include a time to picnic during. Sadly no dogs. For further information call 01823 681522.

Friday, August 10th
UFFCULME: Barbecue with folk and jazz live band at Coldharbour Mill's Gill Box Restaurant. Phone restaurant to book on 01884 840066 or (freefone) 0800 3893859.

Monday, August 27th
UFFCULME: Bank Holiday Steam Up at Coldharbour Mill with entertainment for the whole family, from 10am-4pm. For details call 01884 840960 (office hours: weekdays 9.30am-1pm) Email: info@coldharbourmill.org.uk or visit the Mill website: www.coldharbourmill.org.uk.

The Honiton Show

The 121st Honiton Agricultural Show takes place on Thursday 30th August 2012.

THE Grand Parade will take centre stage amongst the main ring activities where the day's prize winners will proudly parade giving the viewing public a wonderful opportunity to see the beautifully turned out exhibits including Alpacas, Cattle and Sheep. The main ring is delighted to announce the return of the Bolddog "Lings" Freestyle Team, Honda's official and the UK's number 1 motorcycle display team! Cyril the Squirrel and his Racing Terriers will be performing and are one of the country's leading terrier display teams. These fantastic little dogs will keep you all entertained with their crazy antics.

Members of the public are encouraged to participate with their own dogs and children can join in the fun and race against these speedy little terriers! With a main ring bursting with activities throughout the day, the show introduces a third fantastic act, the Rockwood Dog Display Team will provide breathtaking canine wizardry and are stars of film and television.

We are thrilled to welcome two tame otters, Belinda and Rudi, who will be based in the lower field with their owner Daphne Neville who will give a marvellous insight into these wonderful animals. New to Honiton is Owls R Us an educational display of fascinating birds of prey including the beautiful barn owl.

r the equestrian enthusiast view the wonderful heavy horses in the main ring or enjoy the elegance of side saddle in the horse rings. Again Honiton will host the West of England Hound Show a show within a show which has a huge following and forms a part of the lower field countryside activities. The Blacksmiths Guild will demonstrate their expertise and compete against each other during the day. Enjoy a trip down memory lane with all the traditional rural skills ranging from woodturning to a local village smithy.

The vintage tractors can also be found in this area where over 100 vehicles are on display. Why not sample the good life and view the chickens on sale within the poultry show. There is a fantastic dog show consisting of both Pedigree classes and fun classes for the family pet. With over 400 trade stands, including a Craft marquee and a Food Hall bursting with over forty five exhibitors and locally sourced public caterers there really is something for everyone. There are fantastic food courts to tickle your taste buds our caterers offering the best produce Devon has why not start the day with a bacon roll from award winning Kenniford Farm.

There is so much on offer including delicious steak burgers or take the healthy option and sample the fayre at the noodle bar. When its time to take a breather from all the entertainment and shopping sit back and enjoy a locally brewed ale or a refreshing Pimms from award winning Otter Brewery based in Luppitt. The Young Farmers marquee goes from strength to strength take time to view all the entries ranging from photography to cookery and then cheer for your favourite group in the final of the Young Farmers Tug of War in the main ring. Experience the best Devon had to offer, you cannot afford to miss a fantastic day out for all the family. The Honiton Show has a unique atmosphere it brings new and traditional agriculture together so make a note in your diary as the organisers look forward to welcoming you.

Don't forget accompanied under 16's go free. Make savings and purchase advance admission tickets now for only £11.50 per adult.

Barleymow's Maize Maze & Activity Field

ONCE again Barleymow's Maize Maze and Activity Field opens its gates for traditional outdoor family fun without a television or computer in sight! The activity field lets both children and parents enjoy messing about together but, because of its open layout, equally allows you to watch the kids run free whilst you sit back relax, enjoy the fantastic views and maybe a cream tea!

Activities include the straw mountain with tunnels and slides, trampolines, sandpit, ball games, zip wire, pedal go carts, skittles, giant draughts and barrel train rides, not to mention the prize draw quiz which runs through the maize maze.

Season tickets are available which mean after your second visit all further visits are free. Also look out for our new icecream shack serving creamy jersey milk icecreams and very naughty sundaes! As usual the licensed restaurant will be open until 5pm serving all day breakfasts, hot & cold lunches, snacks and cream teas. The Farm Shop stays open until 6pm just in time to grab something to take home for the BBQ!

The Maize Maze is open from Saturday 21st July until Sunday 2nd September 9.30am - 5pm (last entry at 4pm). Contact us for more details on 01460 62130 - wwwbarleymowsfarmshop.co.uk.

This summer also sees the 10th Anniversary of Barleymows so please join us in the grand marquees for our Birthday Celebrations on Saturday 18th August 1pm - 5pm for our annual Craft Fair and Summer Food Festival, where you can meet our suppliers and try some free samples. We will be serving cream teas (in aid of S.U.R.E) and the Three Counties Jazz Band will be playing from 2pm onwards. There will also be lots of childrens activities and free entry to the Maize Maze. We look forward to celebrating with you.

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WHAT A SUMMER WE'RE HAVING SO FAR! BUT NEVER MIND THE WEATHER, WE'RE BUSY!

We finished our Clarondene Banner and it took a proud position in the marriage parade of Alison's daughter (after 20 years and three children together, they had an arty, two weekend event including a Moot in a four hundred year old hall with a Minstrel's Gallery with most of us in fancy dress – oh well.)

Banner complete, we made bunting and hung flags for the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. We were about evenly divided between dark and light blue supporters and found talking about where these allegiances came from is even more fascinating than the race – until a single swimmer brings the whole flotilla to a halt.

We were glued to all the events of the Queen's Jubilee, conscious that we were taking part in a historical event equal to many of the celebrations we have learned about in history. We loved the ships in the Bay and the excitement of the Uniforms on the Parade. Everyone at Clarondene was impressed by the way Her Majesty stood throughout the river trip, seemingly unaware of the beautiful twin thrones behind her. Poor husband, ill the next day! We had a very successful party ourselves, planned by the residents from invitation making to designing the Menu. Many thanks to all the contributors to that busy afternoon.

Then we followed the complications of the group stages and knock-out matches in the European football bonanza, arm-chair opinions abounding on England's performance. As the proud grandmother of two Spanish children, I thought the best team won myself.

Wimbledon provided way beyond its usual excitement with Andy Murray doing Scotland and, kind of, Team GB proud, by playing with the big boys in a grown up way and then crying at the end.

We are eagerly awaiting the Olympics, but in the meantime have had our own Lyme Regis celebrations and events to cheer and celebrate over the recent wet weeks. We are enjoying the RNLI Lifeboat Week at the moment and are currently planning where to stand for the Summers Parade on Wednesday. We were so glad that Ritchie Durrant carried the Torch in the REAL parade running around the torch route. We actually decided to abandon watching the Olympic Torch visit Lyme due to crowds and torrential rain. Thanks to the local papers for all the photos and write-ups.

During the Olympics in the coming weeks, we have three Birthdays to celebrate here. I am sure the years go round quicker as we get older, but Birthdays become even more significant for all celebrating as we think of the mothers who have gone ahead, happy memories of Birthdays past, and the possibility each one could be the last.

The quality of how we spend our time becomes more important with the knowledge that we are, as my dad used to say, "In extra time". Sadly, Activities Co-ordinators Lucy and Diana have moved on to new adventures in their lives, so while Meg fills in temporarily, we are looking hard for persons to 'fill their shoes'

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Have a good, interesting, active summer with or without the sunshine! We hope the wonderful Lyme Regis First Responders, Coastguards and Lifeboat Crew will continue to keep us all safe – but not be too busy to enjoy the summer themselves!

We are looking for an empathetic, enthusiastic Activities co-ordinator, job share considered. Full training given. Contact Alison or Mandy 01297 301156

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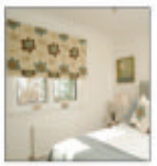

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